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SUBJECT: MOI MINISTER ATMAR GETS WHAT HE WANTS AT LOTFA STEERING
COMMITTEE MEETING

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Several of Minister of Interior Atmar's highest priority initiatives were the subject of the March 12 Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) Steering Committee meeting. The Minister was successful in getting LOTFA to pay for ANP food allowance arrears, an increase in this year's food allowance, survivors' benefits for deceased ANP in the current fiscal year, and professional incentive pay for certain categories of ANP. The most divisive issue, passing financial support for the new Afghan Public Protection Program through LOTFA, was tabled for a possible future meeting. In the end, Atmar achieved his desired result on each initiative discussed, furthering his reputation for credibility and persuasiveness. End summary.

¶2. (U) MOI Minister Atmar chaired a Steering Committee (SC) meeting of LOTFA on March 12, 2009. This was the first such meeting since November 18 of last year, but followed a series of working-level meetings on all of the topics to be raised at the SC. As with all such meetings, Atmar began by providing donor nations with a status report on his various initiatives to reform MOI and the Afghan National Police (ANP), but also laid the groundwork for upcoming requests for increased assistance.

¶3. (SBU) LOTFA Project Manager Sandeep Kumar summarized the financial status of the LOTFA trust. For the two-year period that began in September 2008, pledges toward the \$450 million budget are still short \$186 million. However, the good news announced at this meeting was that Japan would become the largest single contributor with a new contribution of \$125 million, even above the U.S. pledge of \$78 million for the same period. Canada announced a new pledge of \$19 million and the UK jumped on the bandwagon with an additional \$6.7 million in new funds.

¶4. (U) The first agenda item concerned a long-term MOI project to determine the number of deceased and disabled ANP who remained on the personnel rolls and whose families continued to collect ANP salaries. The issue is important since LOTFA, MOI and the Ministry of Finance have agreed that all "martyrs" and permanently disabled ANP officers will transition from LOTFA-funded financial support to MOF's central government pension fund by the 1389 Tashkil (the fiscal or solar year that begins in March 2010). MOI informed LOTFA donors that it had identified a total of 3,199 deceased police officers and 99 who are disabled. Over 300 of those deceased ANP were informally-hired backfill for previously deceased officers, complicating provision of official pensions to their survivors. Atmar said he would pursue a Presidential decree to formalize pensions that all parties agreed they qualified for. Meanwhile, LOTFA will pay for the 3,199 martyrs in 1388, the central budget will cover the disabled, and all such costs will be transferred to the central budget beginning in 1389.

¶5. (U) Minister Atmar accepted responsibility on behalf of MOI for previous poor management of the food allowance provided to ANP in

the field. Nonetheless, he has been pushing for months for the IC to cover a \$17.5 million shortfall in funding for the food allowance for the recently-concluded 1387 fiscal year, and for an increase in that allowance from 100 Afghans to 120 Afghans per day, the same as the allowance for the ANA. The MOF had resolutely refused to support any food allowance costs for the ANP until fiscal year 1389 starting in March 2010, claiming a shortage of resources. The LOTFA Project Document for this two-year period dictates that LOTFA donors phase out and then abolish all financial support for the ANP food allowance by 1389. Although the donors had resisted his pressure for the past few months, in the SC meeting Atmar persuaded LOTFA to pay for the arrears in full, along with the increase in the food allowance for the current 1388 fiscal year (estimated to cost an additional \$12 million). MOF officials present at the meeting agreed to pick up all ANP food costs in their 1389 central budget.

¶6. (U) Again, pay parity with the ANA led Atmar (with CSTC-A support) to suggest professional incentive pay for explosive ordinance, medical personnel and other specialized fields where the ANP has trouble recruiting. CSTC-A offered to fund the first year of incentive pay at a total cost of \$540,000. Although several parties would have preferred a comprehensive pay reform package, there was broad understanding that this was a necessary interim step and the proposal was approved.

¶7. (SBU) We anticipated that the discussion of a CSTC-A proposal to pass its funding for the Afghan Public Protection Program (APPP or AP3) through LOTFA would be the most divisive of meeting topics. In the end, Atmar suggested tabling this last agenda item for a future meeting, and CSTC-A concurred. Several donors were averse to the AP3 conceptually, seeing it as another "rearming of the tribes" or unofficial militia force, and others were unenthusiastic about being

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associated with a pilot program that might ultimately fail. CSTC-A had also figured out a way in the meantime to pay AP3 forces through MOI.

¶8. (SBU) Comment. Minister Atmar was clearly pleased with the outcome of the meeting, and was all smiles. Having met his main objectives, the Minister seemed to have little desire to take on the controversial AP3 as the last agenda topic. The Embassy had informed CSTC-A prior to the meeting that some of the donors were conceptually opposed to the AP3, and that there were concerns that the force was not authorized by the 1387 Tashkil (which is in fact true, although there is authorization for 1388). We do not know if the topic will again appear on a LOTFA SC agenda. End comment.

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